

Impaired driving means that, as a driver, you are not able to operate your vehicle to the best of your abilities. When it comes to impaired driving, alcohol gets the most attention, but there are many things that can cause impairment.



## Alternatives

If you know you will be drinking, or if medications you're taking may affect your ability to drive responsibly, there are other options besides driving yourself home.

**Choose a driver who agrees not to drink.** A sober driver is the safest driver. Remember, a designated driver is someone who drinks NO alcohol at all, *not* the person who has consumed the fewest drinks at the end of the night.

**Stop drinking in time to sober up.** It takes the body approximately one hour to eliminate one drink from your system. If you plan to drive home later, stop drinking in time to let all the drinks you've consumed exit your system before you head home.

**Consider alternative transportation.** If you find yourself late in the evening with no plan for getting home safely, find a sober friend to drive you home; call a cab; or take public transportation. Walk home only if you live close and have safe streets to travel – intoxicated pedestrians have the same impaired judgement as drunk drivers, so don't think you can beat traffic on busy streets and highways.

**Stay where you are.** If you can spend the night at a friend's house, you avoid the terrible consequences of Driving While Intoxicated – for you and everyone else.



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# Driving While Intoxicated

The Effects of Alcohol,  
Medication and  
Illegal Drugs



Missouri Department  
of Transportation



# Driving While Intoxicated

In Missouri, Driving While Intoxicated (DWI) is illegal, and Missouri's DWI law states that a person commits the crime of driving while intoxicated if they operate a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs,

and/or medication – regardless of his or her blood alcohol concentration (BAC) level.

If your BAC level is .08 percent or above, you're deemed legally intoxicated. **Chapters 302 and 577 of the Missouri Revised Statutes**

state it is a criminal offense to operate a motor vehicle at or above .08 percent BAC. But you can also be convicted for DWI with BAC levels lower than .08 percent if an officer can determine your driving was impaired by alcohol, illegal drugs or medication.



## Never Drink and Drive.

If you choose to drink and drive, be aware impairment begins with your first drink. Alcohol is a powerful drug, medically classified as a depressant. Even small amounts of alcohol have been shown to dull reflexes and reaction time. It can blur vision and cause drowsiness – a dangerous combination when you're behind the wheel. No amount of experience with driving can compensate for intoxication. Other factors – including your body weight, your gender, how much you've eaten and how fast you're drinking – also affect impairment.

It is impossible for anyone to predict how alcohol will affect him or her on any given occasion. This leaves only one option: either drink or drive, but never do both. One drink could have serious consequences for you or for others. Every drink, especially the first, takes influence over your body and your mind.

Don't drive with dulled senses. Find a sober driver or take time to sober up before you drive a motor vehicle.

## Drugs and Medication Will Affect Your Judgement.

Driving under the influence of illegal drugs is a criminal offense under **Chapter 577 of the Missouri Revised Statutes**. If you use drugs and drive, you will be charged with a DWI even if you do not have alcohol in your system.

Driving while intoxicated refers to more than just illegal drugs and alcohol. Even prescription drugs can slow your reactions and affect your judgement. If your medication lists drowsiness as a possible side effect, it's best not to get behind the wheel. Over-the-counter drugs may also cause driving impairment. From cold drops to nasal sprays to pain pills, medication can be a dangerous agent to a driver. Many medications affect judgement, especially if they are taken in combination with alcohol. When you notice the effects of medication, avoid driving until the side effects cease.

## Consequences

Driving While Intoxicated is a serious offense. Each year, over 6,000 people are killed or injured on Missouri roads and highways in alcohol-related crashes.

DWI is a criminal charge in Missouri. You won't just get a ticket – you can land in jail, lose your license and pay significant fines and legal expenses. Here are some of the consequences if you are caught driving while intoxicated:

- For a **first offense** (or first offense in over five years), your license will be revoked for 30 days followed by a 60-day suspension.
- A **second offense** could result in a \$1,000 fine, a year-long revocation of your license and up to a year in jail. You will also be required to install an ignition interlock system on your vehicle, preventing your car from starting when you have alcohol on your breath. Ignition interlock systems cost an average of \$800 a year plus installation costs.
- **Third and subsequent offenses** can be penalized with up to a \$5,000 fine and/or up to seven years in jail.

- If you cause a **fatal crash** while intoxicated, you could be charged with Involuntary Manslaughter, a felony resulting in up to seven years of jail time, a \$5,000 fine or both.

### Driving with a .08 BAC is Illegal.

If your blood alcohol concentration is .08 percent or more, you're legally drunk. If you are stopped under suspicion of Driving While Intoxicated, you will be asked to take a Breathalyzer test. The result of a Breathalyzer test alone is evidence for a DWI conviction. And in Missouri, refusal to take a Breathalyzer test can result in immediate loss of your driver's license.

### One and You're Done.

Even though it may be legal to drive after one drink, that doesn't mean you should. Experience cannot compensate for a

lack of motor skills or impaired judgement. Since you may not realize this until you are behind the wheel, it is not safe to drive after consuming any amount of alcohol.

### Driving is a Privilege, Not a Right.

- When driving, it is important to remember the consequences of your actions – other people can be harmed or killed as a direct result of your bad judgement.
- If you're caught driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, your license can and will be revoked.
- There are criminal repercussions when you drive while intoxicated, even if you do not have a BAC of .08 percent or higher. If you are suspected of DWI, you may be required to take blood or urine tests, and the results of these tests will be used to convict you on DWI charges.
- Remember, one and you're done. One drink influences your mind and your body. If you've had one, it's just not worth getting behind the wheel.

